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## VATICAN INVITES HINDUS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### Notes Fundamental Right Includes Possibility of Changing Religion

VATICAN CITY, OCT. 20, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue is inviting Hindus to "join hands in promoting religious freedom as our shared responsibility, by asking the leaders of nations never to disregard the religious dimension of the human person."

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran made this invitation in the Vatican's customary greeting to Hindus for Deepvali. The message was released today.

Deepvali celebrates the victory of truth over falsehood, of light over darkness, of life over death, of good over evil. The celebrations, which begin this year on Oct. 26, last three days and mark the beginning of a new year, a time for family reconciliation, especially among brothers and sisters, and adoration of the divine.

"There are many fields in which a specific contribution can be made to the common good, such as the defense of life and the dignity of the family, the sound education of children, honesty in daily conduct, and the preservation of natural resources, to name a few," the cardinal wrote in the message.

He noted the plight of those who are "exposed to bias, prejudice, hate propaganda, discrimination and persecution on the basis of religious affiliation." And he said that religious freedom is "the answer to religiously motivated conflicts in many parts of the world."

"Religious freedom is numbered among the fundamental human rights rooted in the dignity of the human person," Cardinal Tauran stated. "When it is jeopardized or denied, all other human rights are endangered." The cardinal also highlighted some of the main elements of religious freedom.

He said: "Religious freedom necessarily includes immunity from coercion by any individual, group, community or institution. Though the exercise of this right entails the freedom of every person to profess, practice and propagate his or her religion or belief, in public or in private, alone or in a community, it also involves a serious obligation on the part of civil authorities, individuals and groups to respect the freedom of others. Moreover, it includes the freedom to change one's own religion."

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